

December 10, 2019

TO: AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

FROM: Kenneth Troske, Chair, American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (AEA CGR)

RE: Annual Committee on Government Relations Report for 2019

Members of the American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (CGR) in 2019 were: Kenneth Troske (University of Kentucky), Chair, June-December 2019; Phillip Swagel (University of Maryland), Member and Chair, January-May, 2019; Leemore Dafney (Harvard Business School), January-August 2019; Karen Dynan (Harvard University); Thomas Holmes (University of Minnesota); Susan Houseman (UpJohn Institute); Bruce Meyer (University of Chicago); Karen Palmer (Resources for the Future); Nina Pavcnik (Dartmouth University); Fiona Scott Morton (Yale University); and Betsey Stevenson (University of Michigan). Katherine (Kitty) Smith Evans staffs the Committee.

The CGR was established in 2009 to represent the interests of the economics profession in Washington, D.C. and other locations around the country. A description of the Committee's primary activities may be found on its website. As is true of the AEA, the Committee does not take positions on questions of economic policy or on any partisan matter.

Meetings: The Committee met by phone 8 times in 2019. Kitty Smith Evans also met frequently with representatives of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) and other organizations whose interests overlap with those of the AEA, and with relevant staff at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), attending membership, informational and advisory committee meetings.

Issues: In 2019, the AEA CGR monitored actions by Congressional Appropriations committees to fund government science and statistical agencies of importance to AEA members. The Committee also took on as a priority and followed closely the Federal government's progress toward implementing the 2018 Foundations for Evidence Based Policymaking Act. Government actions affecting sexual harassment at universities, and economic education during grades K-12 were discussed, with actions taken on some.

1. In conjunction with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics, the AEA CGR filed a formal response to a request for comments on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Phase 3 Strategic Data Plan. The Comment, available at <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=10351>, supports the idea of strategic data planning but notes that Phase 3 of the Strategic Data Plan fails to address several important elements of the Foundations for Evidence Based Policymaking Act of 2018, and needs improved clarity on the responsibilities and minimum qualifications of Chief Data Officers and other newly designated Executive Branch data strategy leaders.

Kitty Smith Evans represented AEA at a July 8, 2019 Data Coalition Forum on the Strategic Data Plan, where she summarized the AEA Comment on the OMB Phase 3 plan.

2. The AEA Committee on Government Relations wrote, and copied to relevant Congressional leaders, a letter endorsing the AEA Committee on Economic Education's letter to the National Assessment Governing Board expressing dissatisfaction about the Board's decision to discontinue the Economics Assessment from the Schedule for assessing the outcomes of Grade

12 economic competence, 2019-2029. This Committee's letter is available at:
<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=11110>

3. In response to a Federal Register Notice asking for nominations of candidates to sit on a national Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (recommended by the Commission on Evidence Based Policymaking), the AEA CGR itself sent a list of qualified economists for the Advisory Committee, advertised to AEA members the opportunity and means for nominations by individuals, and, in conjunction with the AEASat Committee, wrote letters of support for three prominent economist nominees.
4. The CGR facilitated the development of a blog (to be disseminated by the Consortium of Social Science Associations) that asserts and demonstrates the value and contributions of an AEA member's NSF-funded economic history research project that had been disparaged in a Congressman's report on federal funding. (See page 8 of <https://www.lankford.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Federal%20Fumbles.pdf>). The blog, defending this AEA member's research that is slated to be published in the *AER*, will be available and widely distributed by the AEA CGR in January 2020.
5. Kitty Smith Evans organized or joined groups organized by a variety of partner organizations to educate Republican and Democratic policymakers and their advisors on issues affecting AEA members or elucidated by economists' data and research findings.

Outreach and Representation

1. Economists Peter Rousseau, AEA and Vanderbilt University, Kitty Smith Evans, AEA, and AEA member Andrew Reamer represented AEA at COSSA's 2019 Science Policy Conference and Social Science Advocacy Day. Dr. Evans led a team of social scientists on visits with the offices of Senators Van Hollen and Cardin, and Representatives Hoyer, Raskin, and Sarbanes. Rousseau and Reamer also made visits with small groups to Senators and Representatives' offices. The AEA Statement on Principles of Economic Measurement was distributed at these meetings.
2. Allison Shertzer, University of Pittsburgh, was identified and recruited by the AEA CGR as the AEA representative to the Coalition on National Science Funding (CNSF) 2019 Congressional Exhibition and Reception. At the Exhibition, Shertzer presented a poster, "Why American Cities are Segregated by Race," which drew a lot of interest and engagement with science and political attendees. Shertzer and Kitty Smith Evans also visited the offices of U.S Senators Bob Casey (PA) and Pat Toomey (PA) and Representative Mike Doyle (PA) to talk about Shertzer's research and about the value of economic research, in general. The AEA Statement on Principles of Economic Measurement was distributed at these meetings.
3. Kitty Smith Evans represented AEA at the April 2019 National Science Foundation, Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Sciences meeting with SBE Scientific Societies.

4. Kitty Smith Evans presented a July 8, 2019 Webinar, hosted by COSSA, on the nature and implications of the relocation of the Economic Research Service. Webinar slides are available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/state-us-data-infrastructure-economic-research-ers-smith-evans/>

Policy Session at 2019 ASSA meetings: The AEA Committee on Government Relations organized a panel session on health policy for the 2019 ASSA Meetings

Plans for 2020:

Two changes in the orientation of the Committee on Government Relations will be part of plans for 2020. First, the Committee will actively advertise to AEA members its work and opportunities for work with AEA members. This will be accomplished through notes posted on the Committee's web page, and through posts on social media. Second, having been mostly reactive in recent years, the Committee plans to be more proactive in 2020, by setting up meetings with policymakers and their advisors to explain how AEA members' data and research findings can contribute to the policy process, and offer the Association's services to them.

Also, the CGR will propose a substantial Policy Session for the 2021 AEA Meeting.